



# Common Writing Errors: Research Paper

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# Comma Splice (c.s.) and Run-ons (r/o)

- **The error:** A comma splice consists of two independent clauses joined (spliced) with a comma; a run-on sentence combines two such clauses with no conjunction or punctuation. The solutions for both are the same.
- **The fix:**
  - 1. Place a conjunction (such as “and” or “because”) between the clauses.
  - 2. Place a semicolon between the clauses.
  - 3. Make the clauses into separate sentences.

# Comma Splice (c.s.) and Run-ons (r/o)

- Examples

- **Example error (c.s.):** He disliked discipline, he avoided anything demanding.
- **Correction:** *Because* he disliked discipline, he avoided anything demanding.
- **Correction:** He disliked discipline; he avoided anything demanding.

# Error in Subject-Verb Agreement (s/v)

- **The error:** A singular subject must take a singular verb; a plural subject must take a plural verb.
- **The fix:** Match them!
- **Example error:** Various kinds of vandalism *has been* rapidly increasing.
- **Correction:** Various kinds of vandalism *have been* rapidly increasing.

# Error in Pronoun Reference (pro ref)

- **The error:** a pronoun must agree in number (and gender) with the noun that it refers to
- **The fix:** Match them!
- **Example error:** It can be dangerous if a child, after watching TV, decides to practice what *they* saw.
- **Correction:** It can be dangerous if a child, after watching TV, decides to practice what *he or she* saw.
- **Correction:** It can be dangerous if children, after watching TV, *decide* to practice what *they* saw.

# Point of View (first and second person)

- Avoid using first (I, me, my) and second (you) person point of view in formal, academic essays.
- **Example error:** *I believe* that the United States should disarm their nuclear weapons because...
- **Correction:** The United States should disarm their nuclear weapons because...

# Titles

- ◉ Longer works like novels, plays, and films are written in *italics*
  - ◉ *Of Mice and Men*
- ◉ Shorter works like articles, poems, and short stories are written in quotation marks
  - ◉ “To Build a Fire”
  - ◉ “Nuclear Weapons Should be Disarmed”



# DO NOT WRITE the phrase:

- In this paper I will....



# Their vs. There vs. They're

- **Their:** possessive pronoun; shows possession. *Their home.*
- **There:** in or at that place. *She goes there.*
- **They're:** contraction of "they are." *They're the World Series champions.*

# Its vs. It's

- **Its:** the possessive form. *The book has lost its jacket.*
- **It's:** the contraction of it is. *It's starting to rain.*

# To vs. Too vs. Two

- **To:** used for expressing direction toward a point, person, place, as opposed to *from*.  
*They came to the house.*
- **Too:** also. *Murphy came too.*
- **Two:** two in number. *I bought two donuts because...well, they're better than one.*

# Than vs. Then

- **Than:** used as a comparison. *He's taller than I am.*
- **Then:** used to indicate a sequence. *I woke up and then I made some coffee.*

# Loose vs. Lose

- **Loose:** free from fastening or attachment.  
*A loose end.*
- **Lose:** to come to be without; to suffer defeat. *To lose one's job.*

# Word Choice

- **Redundant word choice:** “redundant” means unnecessary repetition. In other words, you already said this and don’t need to say it again.
- **Improving word choice:** avoid vague (not clear) word choices like “things” or “big”. Use a more specific noun or adjective.

# MLA Citation Format

- **Short quotations:** When quoting text that is *four lines or less*, see “Short Quotations” on <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/>
- **Long quotations:** When quoting text that is *more than four lines*, see “Long Quotations” on <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/03/>

# MLA Works Cited Format

- **Sample Works Cited Page:** see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/12/>